State of the Media: Vanuatu, 2025

Posted 5 Mar 2025, updated 10 Dec 2025

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This report provides a detailed, up-to-date snapshot of the state of the media in **Vanuatu**.

It is part of the *State of the Media* project, which comprises 12 country reports and one regional report. These reports serve as an accessible resource for media, civil society, and government organisations in support of development goals in the region.

Full Report: 'State of the Media - Vanuatu' (PDF file, 5.2mb)

Research Brief: 'State of the Media: Vanuatu', 2025 (PDF file, 779kb)

Key Findings - *State of the Media*: Vanuatu

- **Importance of improving physical access to rural communities for journalists**

Radio remains the only viable medium for the rural population, as it reaches most of the Vanuatu archipelago via shortwave (SW) transmission. The Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) upgraded its SW and medium wave (MW) services in 2019.

Despite improved audience access to radio, media practitioner respondents noted that media coverage and representation of issues in rural communities remain minimal. Respondents attributed this in part to challenges faced by journalists in accessing these geographically dispersed communities. They flagged that organisations lack funding for reporting in the field, and that issues around transport infrastructure need resolving to make rural reporting sustainable.

- **Greater market protections wanted for local media businesses**

Media practitioner respondents from businesses specialising in Indigenous Ni-Vanuatu content expressed a desire for greater market protections against external competition, both regionally and internationally.

Local media specialising in Indigenous content want to scale up and build their audiences without needing to diversify to compete for greater audience share. Respondents feel strongly that building the resilience of media organisations that produce Indigenous content would also preserve traditional storytelling values, which are a central part of Vanuatu's culture and history.

- **Accessing government information and ensuring media freedom remain a challenge**

The Right to Information (RTI) Act was passed in 2016, giving the legal right to individuals (and media) to access information from any government agency.

However, despite the improved legal provisions to facilitate information access, media practitioner respondents highlighted challenges in accessing information. Respondents flagged the considerable time lag between requesting and receiving information, which impacted the currency of news stories published.

There are also media freedom concerns about the impact of the recent amendment to the Penal Code to include criminal libel and slander for both traditional media and social media platforms.

- **Media self-regulation is viewed as critical for preserving media independence**

Media practitioner respondents believe that media independence will only thrive in an industry that is self-regulated. The prevailing sentiment is that each media organisation should be held accountable in complying with its editorial guidelines.

A self-regulated media industry was also seen as a cornerstone in developing investigative journalism and more independent inquiry into government issues.

Self-regulation is an area that media practitioner respondents believe could be improved.

- **Opportunities for media to increase awareness on gender, disability and social inclusion**

Media practitioner respondents asserted that there is minimal awareness of gender inclusion within the community and government. Inclusion is sometimes viewed as a foreign ideology, which can incite local resentment against initiatives that explicitly reference it. Local culture and churches were emphasised as being influential in maintaining gender stereotypes and stifling progress on gender equality.

According to respondents, media have the potential to play a key role in shifting prevailing mindsets through their content, highlighting the significance of inclusive reporting through a locally relevant lens.

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